Impact of Iraq war on economy

*457. DR. M.N. DAS:

SHRI R.P. GOENKA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 19 given in the Rajya Sabha on 18th February, 2003 and state what steps are being considered by Government to overcome the impact of Iraq war on our economy?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): The Government constantly reviews the situation arising out of the Iraq war and appropriate steps are taken in accordance with national interests and policy objectives. Measures were taken to insulate the economy from volatility in international crude oil prices. The Government, through our Mission at the UN, constantly monitors developments regarding the Indian export consignments shipped prior to the withdrawal of UN inspection officials from Iraq. In the post war scenario, it is our expectation that a lifting of UN sanctions on Iraq will offer greater opportunities for trade with Iraq.

Strike by employees of BPCL and HPCL

*458. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE:

SHRIMATI CHANDRA KALA PANDEY:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the workers and employees including officers of HPCL and BPCL observed a three day strike commencing from 25th March, 2003;

(b) if so, what are their demands and the steps taken to avert the strike and decision taken on their demands; and

(c) whether Government propose to agree to revert the decision of disinvestment of these profit-making Oil Companies?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) The workers and employees of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (HPCL) observed a three-day strike from 25th March, 2003. The officers of these companies did not participate in the strike.

(b) and (c) The striking unions demanded reversal of the decision of the Government of India to disinvest in BPCL and HPCL. Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) approached the respective Regional Labour Commissioners to intervene in the matter for reconciliation. The Government of India also requested the State Governments to provide all possible assistance to the OMCs. There is no change in the decision of the Government to disinvest in BPCL and HPCL.

Time schedule of Agartala-Kolkata flight

*459. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of times the schedule of flights of the Indian Airlines from Agartala to Kolkata and *vice versa* have been changed during the last six months;

(b) whether the inter-service arrangement of the aircraft connecting the capital cities of the North-Eastern States would be in force in reality;

(c) if so, by when; and

(d) whether the State Government would be taken into confidence while making changes in the time-schedule of the aircrafts?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) Indian Airlines operates two major schedules every year for Summer and Winter season, in which changes are made keeping in view the operational requirements to meet contingencies. For sector Kolkata-Agartala, changes were made in first fortnight of March, 2003 due to operational reasons and minor adjustments in the timings of the flights due to introduction of 2 ATR flights effective 15th April, 2003.

(b) and (c) Currently the capital of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram are connected with air services to the rest of the country.

Itanagar, Capital of Arunachal Pradesh is not connected because of non-availability of an airport. Kohima, Capital of Nagaland is not directly connected in view of non-availability of an airport. However, passengers travelling to/from Kohima, avail of Alliance Air flights from Dimapur which is in close proximity to Kohima.

(d) Changes in the time schedule of arrival and departure of the aircraft are made keeping in view the operational requirements and traffic demand. While there is no formal consultation, the views of State Governments are kept in view to the extent feasible.